

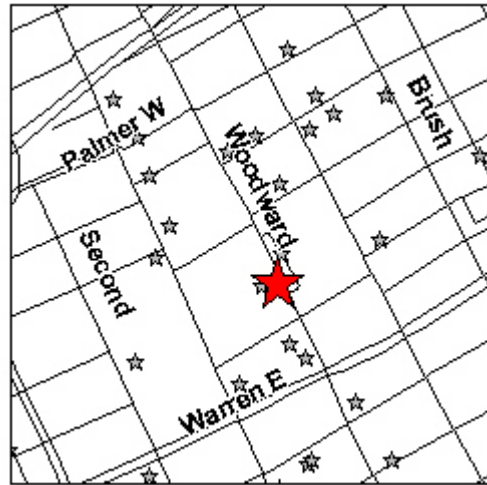
Cultural Center Historic District

5200, 5201 Woodward Avenue, and 100 Farnsworth Avenue.

Local
State
State Marker
National ✓ 11/21/83



Detroit Public Library
Photo courtesy of National Park Service



Historic overview:

The Cultural Center Historic District is the nucleus of the cultural district, and encompasses some of Detroit's most important civic architecture. It also attests to the significant achievements of the City Beautiful movement of the early twentieth century. With considerable foresight, civic leaders purchased ideal sites for the future library and art museum. The completion of the Public Library, designed by Cass Gilbert, in 1921 and the Institute of Arts, designed by Paul Philippe Cret in 1927, created for Detroit a distinguished cultural center. Though early plans for the cultural center called for related buildings to cluster around these buildings, the cultural center remained unchanged until 1941. The Horace H. Rackham Education Memorial Building, designed by Harley, Ellington and Day, was built directly south of the Institute of Art. The Rackham Building completes the trio of monumental buildings, similar in scale, character, materials and setbacks. Together, these three buildings provide a unique monumental streetscape for Detroit.

The City Plan Commission published a revised Cultural Center Plan in 1943, and the Cultural Center area expanded from 1951-1975. The Detroit Historical Museum was constructed, as well as the International Institute, the Society of Arts and Crafts Art School, and the Detroit Science Center. Though located in the area known as the Cultural Center, these post-1943 buildings are not included within the Cultural Center Historic District because they do not maintain the scale, materials, character and setback found in the three earliest buildings, and are a result of the 1943 revised Cultural Center Plan.

